

#48 & 50 King Street,
New York City.
New York Co

HABS No. 4-20

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NY,
31-NEYO,
21-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

District No. 4
Southern New York State

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Historic American Buildings Survey
Wm. Dewey Foster, District Officer,
25 West 45th Street, New York City.

48-50 KING STREET

New York City.

HABS
NY,
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21-History and Location

While now principally occupied by commercial and manufacturing buildings, the district in which these houses are located was formerly considered one of the most beautiful sites along the Hudson; it was then known as "Richmond Hill". Here, at what is now Charlton and Varick Streets, stood "a wooden building of massive architecture with a lofty portico supported by Ionic columns, the front walls decorated with pilasters of the same order and its whole appearance distinguished by a Palladian character of rich, though sober, ornament. The interior was spaciouly designed with restful amplitude about everything which was a feature of most true Colonial houses". ("Greenwich Village" - Anna C. Chapin.) This house was built in 1765 by Major Mortier, a commissary of the English army, who named Richmond Hill after the English place of the same name. It was used as Washington's headquarters in 1776, and in 1789 Vice-President John Adams came to live there. In 1797 Aaron Burr acquired the property and lived there until 1804. The property was deeded to John Jacob Astor in 1804 and he sold plots #14 and #15 (48 and 50 King Street) to Samuel Martin and John Gridley, respectively, in 1827. There is no record of the actual date of the erection of the two houses being considered but there is every likelihood that they date not later than 1830.

Among those who owned the properties after that date were Joshua Brush, Conklin Martin, Clara Schuyler, Wm. S. Coffin, F.H.

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Clark, and the present owner, J. B. Consiglia.

The Building

Exterior - The two houses form a single three story and basement unit, divided at the sidewalk level by the old carriage driveway. On either side are the entrance steps and doorways to the respective houses, the most attractive exterior features. The iron fence, posts and rails are also interesting and typical of the city houses built in this district at that time. The wood doorways are recessed, with a Doric order, rusticated wood courses and leaded glass transoms; they are charming both in scale and detail. The same doorway treatment was repeatedly used in this district. The walls are of red brick with stone sills and lintels and a metal cornice. The brass door pulls and knockers are exceptionally good.

While there is no direct evidence, it is very probable that the third floor was originally contained under a sloping roof with dormers, as indicated by adjoining houses and others in the neighborhood.

In the rear there is still evidence of the old driveway which came between the houses to the back yard where the stables must have been located. There are also on either side of the yard old sheds, probably used for storage or as tool houses.

Interior - The interior has been somewhat altered, or adapted, for its use as small apartments, a change which is constantly being made in such houses, principally by the mere addition of extra baths and kitchenettes. While there is no outstanding feature, the hall archway, the simple stair detail, some of the old wood mantels and the original door trims are interesting in design and in detail.

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The stair is located at the back of the long hall, and a rear porch in the yard leads from this hall.

The houses are in fair condition.

Written April 24th by

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